

5-1-1991

Waiting, waiting and waiting

Myoung Lim Lee

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.rit.edu/theses>

Recommended Citation

Lee, Myoung Lim, "Waiting, waiting and waiting" (1991). Thesis. Rochester Institute of Technology. Accessed from

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Thesis/Dissertation Collections at RIT Scholar Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of RIT Scholar Works. For more information, please contact ritscholarworks@rit.edu.

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Fine and Applied Arts
in Candidacy for the Degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

TITLE: Waiting, Waiting and Waiting

By

Myoung lim Lee

Date: May, 1991

Adviser: Phil Bornarth

Date: 5/16/91

Associate Adviser: Judd Williams

Date: 15 May 1991

Associate Adviser: Ed Miller

Date: 5.15.91

Special assistant to the Dean for Graduate Affairs:

Date: 5/16/91

Dean, College of Fine and Applied Arts:

Date: 5/23/91

I, Myoung lim Lee, prefer to be contacted

each time a request for production is made. I can be reached at the following address.

Buck A Hyun 3 Dong 3-38, Sau Dae Mon-Gu, Seoul, Korea

Tel.) 011-82-2-364-1520

Date: May, 1991

A letter to my parents

May, 1991. Myoung lim Lee

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	2
I-1. Proposal and Process	3
II. Explanation of Individual pieces	6
1. The First Experience	6
2. The Virgin	7
3. Waiting, Waiting and Waiting	8
4. To Go To Heaven	9
5. Merry Christmas and Happy New year	11
III. Conclusion	12
IV. List of Illustration	14
Appendix A. Specific Symbols and Initial Images	20
Appendix B. Artists and Lessons	21
Bibliography	22

I. INTRODUCTION

My work comes from my feelings about women's emotions toward the family and the relationship between males and females. The forces that have guided me most were hope, faith and a strong spirit that I could have experienced before.

The spiritual introspection started by my asking myself questions: "Why am I here? What am I here for? Where am I going? What am I looking for?" I had to clarify who I was and what I had been looking for. This involved most of my experiences, thoughts, and studies about religion and philosophy. There was so much that I did not understand. What the whole experience meant really did not become clear until I was finished and had the time to read and reflect.

For my aesthetic world, I was compelled to bring my life and actual experiences expressed through my point of view. My work is a record of my life. Although rarely a strict narrative, my art allows the remembering of things I have seen and experienced. I nurtured my memories and imagination, giving them different ways of life as I do my art.

To express these ideas, I have used colored rice paper collage and dry pigments mixed with animal glue to emphasize the dry surface of my paintings. Each piece of collage is a piece of my mind depicting the passion of relationship between male and female and the purification of their emotions. I developed these ideas using torn paper in an abstract form. As in many other works of art, here I used many feminine symbols, such as closed circles and shapes. Spirals in my interpretation, suggest the meaning of eternal life.

I-1. Proposal and Process

The primary concern of my investigation was the imaginary space of human thought through philosophy, the relationship between male and female, memory, and the imagination, as explored through the use of rice paper images. My work combines three major processes of image change: 1) image manipulation, 2) collage, and 3) coloring. Images "blurring" space through the spontaneous effect of thin torn rice paper on the already existing drawings, like memories from my past experiences. I used to create an imaginary space in which other images, symbolic of other ideas and emotions, could be easily expressed. As a condition, I nurtured my imagination in such a way as to make them into something more.

In my work, I mainly used fragile rice paper with dry pigment which was easily handled when applied on paper. When I applied the dry pigment with glue on the paper, it had a special character expressing intense emotion. Through this character, I found a unique texture using rice paper and dry pigment which resulted in ambiguous images of transparency and intense background color. Memory and imagination become obscure and abstract. By the same token, unclear images give people more imagination than clear ones. This process made me express my emotion more realistically. The distinct shapes of the collage object are not immediately distinguishable; the viewer needs time to differentiate the image. Because the image is not clearly defined, one can make the image more into abstract space. One actively uses one's imagination.

More texture was incorporated by layering rice paper many times to create a wrinkled texture, thus creating a unique feeling. Collage is described by Florian Rodari as the process of "combining, rhythmizing, and constructing."¹ Form builds up a new reality. Stimulating the imagination of the viewer more than painted picture work. Due to its spontaneous torn rice paper space, collage shows the inner world of the artist. The process

¹ Florian Rodari, Collage, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., New York, 1988, p.5.

of collage also involves more directly the work of the artist's hand and reveals his or her sensations. By tearing, pasting, and coloring, I can place my emotions directly on the surface.

Many other artists have used collage to more fully express themselves. In my approach to collage within this tradition, it is worth noting, in particular, the influence of Lee Krasner, Matisse, Max Ernst, and Edvard Munch. Using paper collage on canvas and paintings, Lee Krasner combined many situations on one picture plane and expressed her own idea about nature. I learned experimental vision and experimental control from Lee Krasner. I was very interested in meanings of the circle and the spiral as related to women and imagination. Max Ernst used collage for his dream images. He combined images in an imaginary or surrealistic way and hand colored them. I was impressed by the Munch's painting called "Jealousy" and the concept of death and life which combined everything for his expression. On the other hand, the abstract pictorial qualities from Matisse's art especially his fine sense of touch, surface, and flat color affected me also.

In my work, imagination was a starting point for collage. Starting with one torn paper, I added other object and images to make the meaning clear. The finished form resulted in a texturally layered abstract collage painting. The method of creating an image is the process of gradually expanding my ideas piece by piece. I enjoyed this procedure because it explores different spontaneous effects and I could add more interesting images with coloring. For me, the subtle colors were the more imaginative imagery. Initially, I worked with small, two-dimensional collages to create a more literal content. This process was a more experimental process for myself, entering into the complicated images until they lost their essence and appeared simple. This reveals the simplicity within the complex content.

My working process can be briefly summarized as following: first, I picked a number of images from my sketches which I found to be particularly suggestive of an

emotion or experience. Next, I experimented making spontaneous collage pieces on surface of the rice paper using colored rice papers with flour paste. I made sketches and wrote down my ideas, emotions, questions and opinions about the relationship between the male and female in general. I also looked for additional related imagery. When such imagery was founded, I used thin rice paper on the surface of the painting, to develop abstract forms.

For making a rice paper collage, I made paste by using flour and water for an adhesive. Sometimes coloring on top of the rice paper, I then pasted transparent rice paper on top of painted or unpainted surfaces of rice paper. Finally, I combined the dry pigment mixed with animal glue to make the reinforced image.

II. Explanation of Individual Pieces

1. The First Experience

This piece began with the image of the mountain, a little cloud against a blue sky. I felt the cloud represented hope. Women have their first experience with the expectation that the resulting situation will be better than being alone by herself. In other words, they hope to be happier and they want to be honest about their instinctive desire. But, this could become confusing and hindering.

To express this first experience and embarrassment, I combined several images - the cloud, falling leaves, window, a woman's body, and others - into a collage suggestive of a reclining female figure watching a cloud in the floating sky to express her hope.

In painting the reclining woman's body, Edvard Munch's "Jealousy" piece was inspirational. In his painting, Munch used contrast between the red female and the man's colorless features to stress the sensuous redness of Eve's face.

In order to represent the female, I began to use the flat red monochrome figure to symbolize the embarrassed female. In "The First Experience", I have tried to reach a formal unity that comprises thinker and thought, dream and reality, all of which are enveloped by a sinuous pattern of spirals.

2. The Virgin

The idea for this piece came from the "Pregnant Dream" which I completed in 1985, when my sister in-law became pregnant. I was thinking about the purity of maternal affection and the purity of a virgin. In the "The Virgin" piece, instead of my sister in-law, I used the virginity images of a pink girl. I painted her, using symbolic objects, such as red pepper plants, a snake, and charcoals. To represent this, I put the pink color symbols of a virgin who has physically developed as a female figure holding a bouquet of a pepper plant floating in space.

Through this piece, I depicted the girl who is neither child nor adult: her timid femininity inspires no fear, but a mild disquiet. I felt that she is one of the privileged exponents of feminine mystery. I used the symbolic virgin and the symbolic pregnancy dream to demonstrate that the young girl's purity allows hope for every kind of license.

To express this, I placed the round and oval shapes as parts of the woman's body, and spiral lines, repeated in the background both symbolizing the continuation of life. To create the female figure floating in space, I drew a very red background with a darkness of a hole. To describe this work, I depicted the phrase from The Second Sex: "True enough, puberty transforms the young girl's body. It is more fragile than formerly, but as a mother she is very strong."²

² Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1978, p. 329.

3. Waiting, Waiting and Waiting

The idea for this piece came from the book called The Poetics of Space.³ After working with “Fertile”, I asked to myself about the problem of space and space symbols. Finding another subject which was a house clarified my theme. This piece was done after the “Fertile” piece. I was very deeply involved in death and reincarnation. My mind was very depressed which resulted in the dark color. I felt as if I were dead. - I was in the ground which was so cold, dark, and stifling. After reading The Poetics of the Space I thought about myself. What am I looking for? How would I like to live? Where I would like to stay and go? The answer as simple as a woman’s intuition made me paint my intimate space for rest - home.

If I were asked to name the chief benefits of the house, I should say the house shelters day dreaming, and protects the dreamer. The house also allows one to imagine in peace. Thought and experience are not the only things that sanction human values. The values that belong to daydreaming mark humanity in its debts. Roof gives mankind shelter from the weather. The sun is an indication of the climate. We understand the slant of a roof. Even a dreamer dreams rationally; for him, a pointed roof averts rain clouds. Up near the roof, all our thought are clear. As a main subject, I place the gold fish with the bowl which came from Matisse’s “ Gold Fish “ and ‘The Red Studio”, as one of my day dreams.

³ Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, Bacon Press, New York, 1969.

4. To go To Heaven

The idea for this piece came from the 16th Century Spanish painting which I saw in the Memorial Art Gallery. It illustrates an episode in the life of St. Andrew the Apostle. According to the account in Jacobus de Voragine's The Golden Legend,⁴ a pious bishop aroused the envy of the Devil who assumed the form of a "wondrously beautiful" woman, filling the bishop's heart with desire. However, the seduction was interrupted by the arrival of a pilgrim, who was asked three difficult questions. His answer to the last, that the woman could measure the space between heaven and earth because she had fallen the distance, unmasked her as the Evil one.

I thought If somebody wants to reach heaven, where is heaven and what does it look like? "The basic experimental characteristics of heaven and hell are always the same—endless joy and bliss for heaven, and tortures for hell. Even though their forms range from concrete representations, resembling terrestrial existence in all important respects, to highly abstract metaphysical formulations.

It is not always clear whether those images that are sufficiently concrete for pictorial representation were believed to be literal and accurate descriptions of the after life experiences, or metaphors for the state of mind that can be captured directly by any artistic means."⁵

I place my heaven between hell, and portray hell as a very small space. To represent this, I used contrasting colors which were dark brown for hell and bright blue for heaven with figures floating in Heaven—representing my wish to be there.

The creation of this work had significant steps. First, in the big upper part, I created the female and male figures floating in the sky. To do so, I tore pink and gray colored rice paper. In the second step, to create the atmosphere of space, I put the floating

⁴ Jacobus de Voragine, The Golden Legend, Arno Press, New York, 1969.

⁵ Stanislaw and Christina Grof, Beyond Death, Thames&Hudson Ltd., New York, p.13.

organic vermilion forms with big pink heart shapes. The hearts were composed of pink colored paper in several repeated images. The soft quality of tissue paper, as well as the blue color and the floating figure, worked together to communicate a sense of heaven. The upper and bottom part of hell with their claustrophobic effect made heaven in contrast, appear to be a different world within human love.

The basic idea for this work was to make space ambiguous by naturally torn tissue paper images. This was successfully accomplished through coloring. The hearts also expressed the essential human mind. Using a new abstract motif was more effective than I expected.

II-5. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

This piece focused on the situation in which women find themselves when they send their spouses to other places. While I was starting the new painting, there was a war in the United States. During the Middle East War, the husbands came home for Christmas. Their hugging together to take a family snap shot revealed to me another side of the emotional relationships between male and female.

I combined this image to fit on one piece of a family photograph. On the T.V.screen, the child ran into his fathers arms, saying “Daddy” which made their relationship look stronger. I decided to put the photo corners to suggest the photo image; as well as the strong red line to put their relationship in a circle. Each family member has his own heart in his mind. To express this idea, I used visual effects, such as the pink hearts and the hearts line, using an indistinct paper line from the their head. In the inner background, the red and gray dots are the Christmas tree lights and flowers, implying a blessing.

At that time, I also noticed that only the people who had a family had Christmas trees and Christmas decorations. I, also, tried to make my own Christmas tree. The sparkling light looked as if blessing their reassessment of their relationship and the unity of the family.

III. Conclusion

My five pieces of work explore emotional relationship between the male and female. These can be classified into three steps. The first stage is the process of growing up-women's physical and psychological growth. For this, I showed the pure girl and womb shapes, together, trying to express beauty and mystery. The second stage is the embarrassment and the morality about life, for which I painted the red reclining female. I showed the woman's emotion using the color by itself as meaning, without using any metaphor. This time, the spontaneously torn paper was more interesting and produced a better effect. The third and final stage is a contemplation on what a woman can do about this situation. Creating an imaginary space, emphasizing the hopes and prayers within my mind. I used the symbolism in the "Merry Christmas and Happy New Year", "To Go To Heaven", and "Waiting, Waiting, and Waiting" pieces to show what I want and where I would like to go, which surely must exist.

These pieces combined the material texture, most successfully with my self-satisfaction. Creating an imaginary space, emphasizing the hopes and prayers within my mind.

My work began with small two-dimensional metaphorical collage images. Instead of using them, I started to use real figure imagery which opened my mind and brought a faster development of my idea. My work moved from the realm of memories into real emotion using figures, and family objects to evoke feelings. Having moved into Man's environment, the titling became necessary to directly unite the visual elements which I had already done with colors. Colors helped to complete the works in addition to the content and paper collage technique. This process made me realize the importance of communication and concept. When I started to work, the idea was very abstract in my interpretation. I had my thoughts, but at the start, the collage and imagery seemed too abstract to expound the meaning I and all humanity had experienced. That is why later, I used more concrete shapes and brush strokes, and elaborated my philosophies.

The colors and shapes of the images were often based on what we experience in life. Face colors change to pink when we get embarrassed, therefore pink and blue symbolizing the male, were especially stressed and played a main role in my work. The process of making this art presented the question of how art works.

Many kinds of arts are related to social problems. Could art show the direction for society? Personally, the expression of my feeling and my honesty played a great role in my art while I was staying in the United States. I expressed the emotion and spiritual struggle to survive, and the human condition of the concept. I also began to think about the relationship between male and female using my experience and my imagination. "Memory-what a strange thing it is!" In the Bergsonian sense of world, "memory does not record concrete duration. We are unable to relive duration that has been destroyed. We can only think of it, in the line of an abstract time that is deprived of all thickness."⁶

The relationship between my imagery and my imagination made me contemplate my ideas. Most exciting, however, was using my imagination to create the same emotions that I had experienced in my dreams.

After the show, I found paper fiber which appeared to be fabric fiber or wood fiber. I intend to use more and more fiber texture material. This kind of touchable texture will become both more abstract and more physically touchable. Through the Thesis show I exhibited not only painting but also prints. It was a good chance to explore different means to express my ideas. In media, I will develop in as many areas as I can. In content, I will do my art work to persuade human nature, especially, using women's emotions and thoughts about what women accept and feel through their life. I think that if I have more time to work, I would like my work to become more abstract and more physically enticing.

⁶ Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, Bacon Press, New York, 1969, P.9.

IV. List of Illustrations

These were in the Thesis show at RIT Bevier Gallery during
March 11-March 29, 1991.

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| a.The First Experience,1990 | (30"x36") |
| b. The virgin,1990 | (60"x49") |
| c. Waiting ,Waiting, and Waiting,1991 | (54"x64") |
| d. To Go To Heaven,1990 | (49"x70") |
| e. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,1991 | (59.5"X46") |

a.



b.



c.





e.



Appendix A. Artists and Lessons

Ed Miller-Experimental collage and visual control

Edvard Munch-Emotional color and concept of death and life

Elizabeth Murray-Metaphor ideas and poetic titles

Eva Hesse-Self-insight and Self-discussion

Frida Kahlo-Her honesty through her work

Henri Matisse-Space division and bright flat color

Judd Williams-Ideas of concept and new eyes to the printmaking

Lee Krasner-Experimental attitude

Phil Bornarth-Confidence of color and color aesthetic

Appendix B. Specific Symbols and Initial Images

Blue-Sky or heaven which, include hope. In Oriental culture, blue sky involves water and limitless world

Brown-Earth color which means soil where human and all life physically return after their death; also, contrast in meaning to blue

cloud-Overcast weather, hope and ordeal. After it is over, we hope to have sunshine.

Fish bowl and fish-Day dreaming

Floating figure-Freedom, imaginary figure

Heart-Safe place and shelter

Oval-Young girl

Pink triangle-Falling leaves

Red-Woman, emotion of embarrassment

Spiral-Endless line which starts from a point, but is endlessly chased by a line.

Bibliography

- Messer, Thomas M. Edvard Munch, Harry N. Abrams Inc., New York, 1971.
- Rodari, Florian. Collage, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., New York, 1988.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. The Second Sex, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1978.
- Bachelard, Gaston. The Poetics of Space, Beacon Press, Inc., New York, 1969.
- Heller, Reinhold. Munch: his life and work, The University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Rose, Barbara. Lee Krasner: A Retrospective, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1983.
- Ham, Jack. Matisse: A Retrospective, Park Lane Inc., New York, 1989.
- Barrette, Bill. Eva Hesse Sculpture, Timken Publishers Inc., New York, 1989.
- Herta, Wescher. Collage, Abrams Inc., New York, 1971.
- Eggum, Arne. Edvard Munch and Photography, Yale University Press, 1989.
- Herrera, Hayden. A bibliography of Frida Kahlo, Harper & Row Publishers, New York, 1983.
- Murray, Elizabeth. Elizabeth Murray: Painting and Drawings, Abrams Inc., New York, 1987.
- Stanislav and Christina. Beyond Death, Thames & Hudson, New York, 1990.
- Jacobus de Voragine. The Golden Legend, Arno Press, New York, 1969.